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ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses peer coaching as a form of staff development for assisting teachers to transfer new skills into their active teaching repertoire. This assistance can be provided by another teacher, administrator, specialist, or university professor. The first chapter examines some models of peer coaching such as how the coaching is initiated, who serves as coach, and the coach's role in the classroom. The second chapter discusses several elements that research and practice indicate contribute to effective coaching. In the final chapter, suggestions are offered for initiating and implementing coaching at both the preservice and inservice levels. (JD)

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Improving Teaching Through Coaching

Gloria A. Neubert

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Improving Teaching Through Coaching

by
Gloria A. Neubert

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It is with pride and pleasure that the chapter sponsors this fastback, authored by one of its past presidents, Gloria Neubert. As a chapter, we delight in her accomplishment and proudly recognize her as an outstanding teacher, skilled researcher, and valued colleague. She truly represents what Phi Delta Kappa is all about.

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What Is Coaching?

Coaching is on-site assistance for a teacher who is attempting to apply a new teaching skill. It is a form of staff development designed to assist the transfer of new skills into a teacher's active teaching repertoire. This assistance can be provided by another teacher, administrator, specialist, or university professor.

Coaching is a cyclical process that includes: 1) a conference in which the teacher and the coach plan the lesson, focusing on the new skill; 2) the execution of the lesson by the teacher, with the coach in the classroom to observe the lesson; and 3) a follow-up conference for a debriefing of the lesson by the teacher and the coach. Often this debriefing conference results in new insights, which lead immediately to planning for the next lesson.

The coach serves two major functions during the coaching process. The first is providing feedback to the teacher on specific methodology related to the skill. An effective coach helps the teacher plan how the new skill will be used in the lesson, observes the lesson, and reports what is happening with the skill in the context of a specific class of students and specific content goals. Then, if necessary, the coach helps the teacher adapt and apply the skill in the next lesson. The goal is to have the teacher execute the new skill and incorporate it into his or her active teaching repertoire without any further assistance from the coach.

The second function of the coach is providing personal facilitation to the teacher. In a coaching situation the teacher is a learner trying

to change and acquire new behavior and, as a learner, may experience a certain amount of anxiety. Therefore, the coach, in addition to providing feedback on methodology, should offer affirmation so that the teacher feels supported through this change process.

The following transcript demonstrates the two coaching functions, methodology feedback and personal facilitation. The setting is a planning session between a third-grade teacher and her coach, a second-grade teacher.

Teacher: I thought I'd begin tomorrow by giving this thinking skill a name — cause and effect.

Coach: Yes. You can call it cause and effect. Then explain it as "What happens and why" or "When one action creates another," as we discussed yesterday.

Teacher: Yes. Actually tell them what it means along with the name.

Coach: Approach this deductively, then?

Teacher: Okay. (Pause) I think I should then do an example.

Coach: Will the example be concrete — a real demonstration — or just verbal?

Teacher: I suppose for these third-graders — concrete.

Coach: Yes. Verbal examples are more abstract and should come after the concrete example.

Teacher: All right. I can do that. Maybe like dropping a rock into a pail of water and having the water spill over. (chuckles)

Coach: Exactly! That's great! They can see that. It's very real, very concrete. How about doing three or four concrete examples, and each time ask, "What happened?" That will give the "effect." Then ask, "Why did it happen?" That will be the "cause."

Teacher: I like that. Then maybe I can put what they say on sentence strips — blue for cause and yellow for effect — and put them side by side, but under the appropriate heading.

Coach: Sure! What other concrete examples might be used?

Teacher: (Silence)

Coach: I'm having difficulty thinking of any right now, too. Do you think pictures would do?

Teacher: When I was in college, I had to make a picture collection. I could look through the collection for some examples of cause and effect. I think I may have some. I'm getting excited about this now! Now in the next step when we . . .

Notice that this coach provides specific feedback on methodology when she asks such questions as, "Will the examples be concrete or verbal?" and "What other examples might be used?" thus alerting the teacher to consider the appropriateness of her examples for the maturity level of her third-grade students. The coach also makes generalizations about the teacher's methodology: "Approach this deductively, then?" and "Verbal examples are more abstract and should come after the concrete examples," thus providing general feedback that may transfer to other lessons.

Additionally, this coach sprinkles the session with sincere and appropriate affirming statements: "Yes!" "Exactly! That's great!" and empathy statements, "I'm having difficulty thinking of any right now, too," thus assuring the teacher that she is not alone in this planning process.

How Successful Is Coaching?

Formal studies of coaching and informal reports by teachers who have been coached indicate that it is a successful method for helping teachers learn and apply new skills. Perhaps more important, teachers like this form of staff development.

Research indicates that when effective coaching is linked with 1) study of the rationale for a new teaching approach, 2) observation of the approach demonstrated by experts, and 3) practice of the approach in protected situations outside the classroom, most teachers will be able to apply the new approach in their classrooms. Without coaching, relatively few will achieve this transfer (Joyce and Showers 1982). Additionally, research indicates that coached teachers use the new approaches more skillfully, more appropriately, more frequently, and with greater long-term retention than do trained but uncoached teachers (Baker and Showers 1984).

Teachers involved in coaching projects almost unanimously report their enthusiasm for this form of staff development. One elementary teacher, who participated in a year of coaching, reported during an interview: "I have grown so much this year. My coach is the best thing that ever happened to me professionally." A high school English teacher, after a semester of coaching, wrote in her journal:

> Rick coached me today. I was having trouble with the revision portion of my writing lesson for my tenth-graders. Together we came up with a revision sheet. Ah, the joys of coaching! It's nice being com-

fortable enough to say, "Hey, I'm having a problem! Can you help me out?" The stroking helps a lot, too! It's nice to hear someone else say that something I've done has been done well.

Some coached teachers report that coaching has helped them become greater risk-takers. "I am particularly pleased with one aspect of coaching. It is giving me an opportunity to be a little more adventurous in terms of trying new activities. I can pilot test them on my coach before I take them into the classroom. My fear of failure is lessened." Also, coached teachers often have been candid about admitting that they would have abandoned their attempts to apply a new skill if the coaching had not been available. One university professor reported at the conclusion of a semester of coaching: "There were times when I just wanted to quit – quit trying – but my coach held me accountable. She became my extrinsic motivator. I wanted to learn to do this for her after a while. Now that I can utilize this skill comfortably, I'm glad I stuck in there – glad she was there so I felt I should stay with it."

Models of Coaching

With the success and popularity of coaching as a staff development activity, a variety of models have come into use in recent years. In this chapter we shall examine some of the variables in these models. These variables include 1) how the coaching is initiated, 2) who serves as the coach, and 3) what is the coach's role in the classroom.

How Coaching Is Initiated

Many teachers were first introduced to the coaching approach because it was a component of a workshop or course they took that focused on the development of a skill that was complex and quite unfamiliar to them. More recently, teachers have initiated coaching on their own without the stimulation of a workshop or course. Research suggests that for some teachers only knowledge of the rationale for the skill and observation of demonstrations of the skill are necessary for them to refine skills (Joyce and Showers 1980). However, other teachers appear to need at least the support of coaching to accomplish this. One teacher who had been coached in the refinement of her discussion technique gave this typical testimony: "I guess I could have done this alone, but I didn't in 15 years of teaching. It was the coaching process that finally moved me to do it."

Who Serves as the Coach?

There are typically three choices for the coach. The first is an outside trainer or facilitator who is more knowledgeable than the teacher about the target skill. Sometimes this coach is the coordinator of a workshop or course the teacher is attending. Such a coach would make visits to the school and participate in the three phases of the coaching cycle.

The second choice for a coach is an in-school colleague with knowledge of the skill equal to that of the teacher. A coaching arrangement might result from two teachers enrolled in the same workshop or a team of teachers who agree to help each other fine-tune particular skills.

The third choice for a coach is an in-school colleague who is more knowledgeable than the teacher in the target skill. Usually this is a person who has demonstrated competence in the target skill. The advantages of this third type of coach are: 1) because of their greater knowledge, they usually are more able to help teachers learn a new skill in the shortest amount of time; 2) because they know the school and the students, they are likely to be able to provide more relevant suggestions than an outside coach; and 3) because they are housed in the teacher's school, they are likely to be more available for coaching than an outside coach. A further advantage of in-house coaching is that it can be a reciprocal arrangement. A pair or team of teachers can alternate roles, first coaching then being coached.

What Is the Coach's Role in the Classroom?

The coach's basic role when visiting the classroom is to observe the teacher executing the target skill, to make written notes, and then to share them with the teacher in the debriefing session. If the coach is a more knowledgeable, in-school colleague or an outside facilitator, an alternative role is that of team-teaching coach. Instead of merely observing, the coach teaches the lesson along with the teacher. The

coach models the new behavior for the teacher and then directs or redirects the teacher's behavior as the lesson proceeds. In this way the teacher's behavior is being shaped during the actual teaching, as well as during the planning and debriefing sessions.

Persons other than classroom teachers can serve as team-teaching coaches. In fact, they gain greater credibility as coaches when they serve in this role. Some teachers are reluctant to have resource teachers, supervisors, and administrators as coaches because these persons do not work in the classroom full-time and may not understand the realities of classroom teaching. And in the case of supervisors and administrators, sometimes teachers cannot disassociate these persons from their role as evaluators. However, if these persons teach alongside the teacher and share equal responsibility for the successful execution of the lesson, they are perceived as partners, not as evaluators.

Following are two case studies that show how the dynamics of the different variables of the coaching models described above operate.

Case Study One

In the case study described here, the coaching was initiated without a workshop. It is a reciprocal coaching arrangement involving a more knowledgeable, in-school colleague/coach and an equally knowledgeable colleague/coach. The role of the coach was as an observer.

Debi and Gloria are two university professors who volunteered for a coaching project initiated in their university to encourage professors to examine their teaching effectiveness. They agreed to pair because their teaching and committee responsibilities allowed them to schedule time to plan, observe, and debrief with one another. Debi's goal was to shift her teaching style from teacher-centered (primarily lecture) to more student-centered instruction (entire-class discussion, small-group activities, etc.). She was aware of the advantages of student-centered approaches, had seen others use them, and had used

them herself in precollegiate settings. She was now interested in transferring this approach to her university teaching. Gloria wanted to increase student participation in her classes by refining her wait-time and question-phrasing skills. She had read about these techniques and had tried them in a limited way in a summer reading clinic.

In this reciprocal coaching arrangement, Debi would be coached by Gloria in the acquisition of student-centered instruction, and Debi would coach Gloria as she worked to increase student participation using wait-time and question-phrasing. In this pairing, it happened that Gloria was more knowledgeable than Debi in student-centered instruction because that was Gloria's normal style of teaching. Debi, as coach, was the equally knowledgeable colleague who would help Gloria improve her teaching by using wait-time and question-phrasing.

In the following transcript Gloria is coach for Debi during one of their initial planning sessions. Notice that Gloria, the more knowledgeable coach, provides both feedback on methodology and personal facilitation.

Teacher: What I plan is to have at least some integrated, student-centered activities in my lectures. In preparing for our discussion today, I had to remind myself that I do have to pick my topics carefully for this student-centered approach, because some of the topics aren't in the text at all, so I have to give more information to them and have less student-centered work.

Coach: True. In order to work in discussion groups, they have to have some background in order to make a contribution. So in some cases, you will have to provide them with information in order to develop their background of experience. Then let them do something with it — apply it.

Teacher: In a 75-minute period, I'm not aiming to have the entire time or even the majority of time — as you often do — be student focused. But I'll begin with a student-focused activity.

Coach: Good! Start small.

Teacher: It will be our first discussion on mental retardation. There are a lot of stereotypes associated with the label, "mental retarda-

tion." So I want to deal with these. What I thought I'd do before we discuss the definition and characteristics of mental retardation under the law, I'd tell them, "We'll be discussing mental retardation today. I'd like you to take out a piece of paper, but don't put your name on it. You won't be identified with what you write down. Now, write down anything that comes to your mind when you hear the phrase 'mental retardation'."

Coach: A free-write or brainstorm activity. Terrific! Are you going to give them a couple of examples — to sort of give them permission to voice some of these stereotypes?

Teacher: Maybe I should say that more explicitly. That's what I meant when I said, "You won't be identified with what you write down." Then I'll give them a few minutes. Then I'll collect and redistribute them and ask some students to read off the list that is now in front of them. By doing that, I hope to get them to think about the stereotypes that exist.

Coach: A kind of consciousness-raising?

Teacher: Yes, and then with the lecture that follows to dispel those stereotypes.

Coach: What if you went back to the papers at the end of class and had them identify the ones that are clearly inappropriate? Ask, "Who has a statement on the paper in front of you which you now know is inappropriate?" It could bring the student-centered lesson full cycle.

Teacher: That's a good suggestion. I'll think about that. I have to see if my lecture will take all the rest of the time.

The following transcript is from a debriefing session in which Debi is now in the role of the coach. She has just observed Gloria teach a lesson. However, there is an additional dimension to their reciprocal coaching arrangement. In the previous transcript, Debi made reference to Gloria's skillful use of student-centered methods when she said: "as you often do." In her role as coach, Debi now is able to observe Gloria using these methods. Although Gloria is the one being coached, she also is demonstrating techniques that Debi can use

in her own teaching. In the debriefing session Debi makes reference to the skill application form that she and Gloria had decided to use in their planning session to record each question Gloria asked during the lesson, the amount of wait-time allowed between the question-asking and calling on a student, and the number of student hands raised for each question. Debi, the equally knowledgeable coach, serves in the dual roles of scribe in the classroom and sounding board during this debriefing session.

Coach: Was it helpful for me to write down the actual questions you asked in class, so you can analyze the questions, too?

Teacher: (looking at skill application form) Definitely. We are studying accountability testing in this class. Most of these questions are interpretive and application questions. For example, look at #2, "What does the 3.4 in reading comprehension mean?" and #7, "This student scored at the 9th stanine on the Otis-Lennon Ability Test but only at the 7th stanine on the California Achievement Test. What does this mean to the school system?"

Coach: Yes, I see. And from the stopwatch chart I recorded that you waited only two seconds. After two seconds you called on one of the three people who had their hands raised.

Teacher: Wow! You know, I think I should try to be much more conscious up in front of that room of which questions require more thought time, more higher-order thinking — questions that require multiphase processing. I can see that I should give students more wait-time on these than on simple recall questions.

Coach: Do you think you're pulling in the same number of students with all of your questions?

Teacher: Yes. See question #17, "Evaluate the school." I showed them averages on the California and Otis-Lennon as data for that question. That's one that requires multiphase analysis, so it should have more wait-time to generate extensive thinking. How much wait-time did I give?

Coach: I recorded only four seconds and only one person raised his hand for that one.

Teacher: Really? Only one hand! That should be my focus, shouldn't it? More time for other than simple recall questions. I'll concentrate on that next time and see if I get more hands. I really want them to participate and respond. That's how they learn. Another thing I can do is to rephrase the questions I normally ask. Like, "How many of you think so and so?" "How many of you think (the opposite)?" That's one way to get everyone to respond.

Coach: Would that be an opinion question?

Teacher: (pause) Possibly. Or it could be a several-option convergent question. Yes, I could use it for both types. So there are two techniques I'll try next time.

Case Study Two

This case study describes a coaching model with the following variables: the coaching was workshop initiated; a more knowledgeable, in-school colleague serves as coach; and a team-teaching coaching arrangement is used.

Bonnie and Sonya are elementary teachers involved in one-way coaching. Bonnie is the coach; Sonya is the teacher who is learning a new (to her) and complex approach to teaching writing. Bonnie and Sonya both attended a workshop on the process approach to teaching writing. Sonya is now being coached by Bonnie in using the process approach for teaching her fourth-grade students to write tall tales. Bonnie, a third-grade teacher, is the more knowledgeable, in-school colleague/coach, who in addition to this workshop has had extensive training in the teaching of writing through the National Writing Project network and has demonstrated competence in using the process approach with her own classes. Bonnie has been given released time in order to coach Sonya and other teachers in her school. Bonnie and Sonya plan and debrief the writing lessons; and when Bonnie comes to Sonya's class, she functions as a team-teaching coach.

The transcript that follows is from a planning session. Notice the use of the pronoun "we," since both teachers will be teaching the les-

son they are planning. Also notice the references to the workshop they both attended.

Coach: You've read tall tales to the students?

Teacher: Oh, we must have read 20 of them.

Coach: Great! You've given them a lot of literature to serve as examples when they get into their writing.

Teacher: We've read some long ones, too. We've read *Paul Bunyan*; now we're reading *Mike Fink*.

Coach: So they're coming with a good sense of what tall tales are. What if we start off by asking them to define a tall tale as an introduction to this writing unit?

Teacher: Yes, I think that will help us focus in on what we're going to do.

Coach: When we talked the other day about beginning this unit, we said we would show filmstrips of tall tales. Which ones do you think would be best?

Teacher: Oh, *Pecos Bill* and *Paul Bunyan*. They know those.

Coach: And they're pretty short, aren't they? I think *Pecos Bill* is 10 minutes; *Paul Bunyan* may be 12. So two?

Teacher: Two, yes. I think that would be good.

Coach: And as we finish each, we'll summarize in terms of what? I mean what will we focus on?

Teacher: I think exaggeration would fit here.

Coach: Okay. How much do you think we can accomplish tomorrow?

Teacher: In 40 minutes? Maybe the two filmstrips plus something on exaggeration. Sure.

Coach: How do we go about getting the kids to do exaggerations? How did she do that part? [She is referring to a presenter at the workshop who was an expert in teaching tall tales through the writing process.]

Teacher: A "Can You Top That?" game.

Coach: Oh yes, that will be a fun game for them. They'll love that!

Teacher: We might use some examples like "The soil was so rich that he had to wear shoes on his feet or his feet would grow."

Coach: (laughing) That's great! You've really given a lot of thought to this.

Teacher: You know, we might want to start this part by saying a basic truth, like "The lake was so deep," and then adding "that the fish needed flashlights."

Coach: Yes. Teach them to take a basic truth, like "the deep lake," and turn it into an exaggeration. Last year when we tried this, I think they missed that it had to be a basic truth. We must stress that during the pre-writing activities.

Teacher: I'm ready!

Coach: I think it's super! I'm anxious to start!

Of course, there are other combinations of these coaching model variables. For example, the coaching could be initiated during an inservice course with a more knowledgeable, outside trainer/facilitator functioning primarily as an observer coach. After or during the inservice course, the trainer/facilitator would visit the participants' school and coach them through the planning, observation, and debriefing cycle. A variation would be for this trainer/facilitator to team-teach a lesson with the teacher. Another model that has been used successfully is one that involves pairs of teachers or teams from a school enrolling in an inservice course on coaching. After the course, they return to their school and coach one another.

Elements of Effective Coaching

The essence of coaching is the ability of educators to work together to accomplish particular goals. This requires a positive and supportive working relationship between the coach and the teacher. This chapter will discuss several elements that research and practice indicate contribute to effective coaching.

Confidentiality

Effective coaching occurs in an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality. As a teacher and coach engage in a collaborative effort to help the teacher incorporate the target skill into the teacher's active skills repertoire, the coach should understand that information shared during the coaching cycle should not make its way into the teacher's annual formal evaluation or to other colleagues. A trusting coaching relationship must observe confidentialty.

Comfort Level

Most teachers experience at least some initial anxiety when a coach (especially an observer-coach) begins visiting the classroom. No doubt such anxiety stems from teachers' experiences with administrators or supervisors visiting their classrooms for purposes of annual evaluations. As one teacher reported, "I became so aware of my coach's presence that I forgot entirely what I was saying. Then as I circu-

lated during the students' group work, I wanted to read over her shoulder what she was writing."

In order to dispel this anxiety, some teachers prefer to have their coaches visit their classrooms one or more times prior to the beginning of the coaching cycle. In this way the teacher and students are used to having the coach present before the teacher begins to concentrate on learning and applying a new skill. And the coach becomes familiar with the general operation of the classroom and the overall teaching style of the teacher.

One coaching project involved an entire semester of reciprocal coaching pairs exchanging visits to each other's classrooms to establish this comfort level. At the conclusion of the project, participants reported that this time was necessary for comfort and trust building.

Skill Application Forms

Coaching is not intended to deal with the overall performance of a teacher. Rather, the role of the coach is to focus on the application of one or more specific skills to improve teaching effectiveness. To maintain this focus, various types of observation instruments can be used to record the occurrence of the skill targeted for improvement. Such instruments should be developed by the teacher with the assistance of the coach, and they should be tailor-made for a specific skill.

In the reciprocal coaching arrangement described in the previous chapter, Debi devised a skill application form that Gloria could use while observing her to show the amount of time she spent on teacher-centered instruction as compared to student-centered instruction. By using this form for observations over a period of time, Gloria could show Debi during their debriefing sessions what progress she was making on the targeted skill of increasing student-centered instruction.

Gloria also developed a skill application form for Debi to use when observing her. The form provided space for Debi to record the wait-time Gloria allowed when asking questions and the number of stu-

dents who raised their hands to answer her questions. When using these forms during the debriefing sessions, Debi had precise data to show Gloria to determine whether she was improving in the target skills agreed on for the coaching project.

Another teacher, who was interested in increasing total class participation (two or three students seemed to dominate), simply had the coach use a seating chart and put a tally next to the name each time a student responded. This simple method provided a visual record of each student's participation. With such a record the teacher could try various strategies to get greater participation from all students.

Of course, prepared observation instruments are available in many supervision texts, which coaches can use. Gloria, for example, might have used the well-known Flander Interaction Analysis Categories instrument when observing Debi, instead of the one she and Debi developed. But there is value in having teachers design their own skill application forms for recording feedback. The very act of designing the instrument forces the teacher to think through what the goal for improvement is and what is needed to reach that goal.

Well-designed skill application forms serve several functions in a coaching project. First, the completed observation forms provide the teacher and coach with concrete data to examine and analyze during the debriefing sessions. Second, when the data clearly indicate improvement has occurred, the teacher is reinforced by seeing tangible evidence of progress. Finally, the data speak for themselves and take the onus off the coach for deciding if the teacher really has applied the skill. The coach can begin the debriefing session by presenting the completed skill application form and asking the teacher to interpret the data. This is exactly what happened when Debi presented the data she had collected to Gloria. Gloria responded: "Wow! You know I should try to be much more conscious up in front of that room as to which questions require more thought time."

Skill application forms are used primarily when the coach is in an observer role. They cannot be used in a team-teaching coaching situ-

ation because the coach is occupied with actually teaching alongside the classroom teacher. However, data can be collected after the fact by audio- or videotaping the lesson.

Conferencing Style

In a coaching project, it is important that teachers maintain ownership of their classrooms; because they work with their students daily and know them better than anyone else, they should have the final say about instructional decisions. Coaches are guests in teachers' classrooms; they are there to provide feedback.

Recall the transcript of Gloria coaching Debi. Gloria makes a suggestion she believes may make Debi's lesson even more student-centered: "What if you went back to the papers in front of them at the end of class and had them identify the ones which are inappropriate?" Debi, understanding that this is a suggestion, not a dictate, responds, "That's a good suggestion. I'll think about that. I have to see if my lecture will take all the rest of the time." Although Debi is being coached, she understands that she is still in control; she still has the final say about how her lesson will be played out. The coach cannot appropriate that right.

In providing feedback, a coach should use a non-directive conferencing style. Five types of feedback appear to be helpful to teachers: 1) Praise Comments, 2) Generalization/Labels, 3) Clarifying Questions, 4) Eliciting Questions, and 5) Leading Questions.

Praise Comments: Teachers who have been coached, almost without exception, report how important praise from their coaches came to be for them. One teacher reported, "I liked the coaching process. I loved having a buddy, a partner. We all respond to encouragement. I am no exception. My partner was generous in her positive feedback and I, of course, was motivated by this." Another teacher said, "I found myself really needing and looking forward to that written praise from my coach."

Praise should be sincere. Expressions such as, "Great!" "Yes!" "Exactly!" are often extemporaneous, but offer brief and immediate encouragement during planning and debriefing. Affirming statements that explain why something is being praised help the teacher to understand exactly what is being done well. For example, when the third-grade teacher in the transcript in the previous chapter suggested as an example of cause and effect, "dropping a rock into a pail of water and having the water spill over," her coach responded: "Exactly! That's great! They can see that! It's very real, very concrete," thus linking the teacher's specific example to a generalized reason for the effectiveness of that example.

Generalizations/Labels: Sometimes a coach will respond by making a generalization, which is not intended as a praise comment but rather to facilitate transfer. For example, when Debi opened the planning session by saying, "Some of the topics aren't in the text at all, so I have to give more information to them and have less student-centered work," Gloria responded with the generalization: "In order to work in discussion groups, they have to have some background in order to make a contribution. So in some cases, you will have to provide them with information – develop their backgrounds of experience. But then let them do something with it – apply it."

Sometimes generalizations are simply labels the coach provides for what the teacher is describing. In that same transcript where Debi describes her first student-centered activity, Gloria responds with the label, "A free-write or brainstorming activity." This labeling should assist Debi in transferring the concepts of free-write or brainstorming activities as an option for future student-centered lessons.

Clarifying Questions: Clarifying questions are those the coach asks in order to gather additional information. Sometimes clarifying questions are asked because the coach does not understand something observed during the lesson or heard during the conference. For example, when Gloria proposed that one way she would use to elicit more hand-raising would be to rephrase some questions, "Like 'How many of

you think so and so? How many of you think the opposite?' " Debi responded with, "Would that be an opinion question?" With this question Debi might have been seeking only clarification, but she also caused Gloria to reflect on what she was doing. Gloria responded, after pausing to think, "Probably. Or, it could be, I suppose, a several-option, convergent question. Yes, I could use it for both types."

Clarifying questions also allow the coach to express reservations about an instructional procedure in a non-directive way. For example, when a high school teacher announced during her planning session with the coach that she intended to use a small-group activity in her lesson, the coach realized that the activity really was unnecessary considering the simple objective to be accomplished. The coach responded by asking, "Why did you decide to use a small-group activity here?" The teacher, in attempting to explain, discovered herself that the simple objective could be accomplished with only a few minutes of individual student seat work. If instead of asking the clarifying question, the coach had responded with the directive statement, "I don't think you need a small-group activity here. Your objective is a simple one and doesn't require the student interaction in group work. Just have them individually do the ditto sheet for a few minutes," the teacher would not have had the opportunity to discover for herself that the activity was unnecessary. The clarifying question asked her to justify what she was planning to do, and in doing so, she realized that it wasn't such a good idea. Also, in coming to this decision by herself, she, not the coach, was in control of her classroom.

Eliciting Questions: These are questions the coach asks in order to get the teacher to hypothesize about how something might be accomplished in the lesson. For example, in the transcript where the third-grade teacher gave one concrete example to demonstrate cause and effect, her coach asked the eliciting question, "What other concrete examples might be used?" This question challenged the teacher to think about additional examples she might use for the class. Another example of an eliciting question is when Bonnie, the coach, asked

Sonya, the teacher, "When we talked the other day about beginning this unit, we said we'll show filmstrips of tall tales. Which ones do you think would be best?"

Eliciting questions, like clarifying questions, are designed to keep the teacher in the role of decision maker and active learner. Eliciting questions assume that teachers often are aware of alternative instructional strategies and simply need to be coaxed to call them into use.

Leading Questions: The general rule in a coaching relationship is that the coach should ask, not tell. However, when the coach wants to suggest a specific methodology but not usurp control of the lessons, a leading question can be used. In their team-teaching coaching approach, Bonnie asks Sonya the leading question, "So they're coming with a sense of tall tales. What if we start off by asking them to define a tall tale?" Bonnie has an idea of how this unit should begin, but she allows Sonya to make the actual decision and thus maintain control of the lesson.

Teacher Autonomy in the Coaching Process

Central to the coaching process is that teachers maintain control of the planning and debriefing sessions devoted to the acquisition and execution of a new skill. The first planning conference should begin with the teacher stating the target skill to be mastered. For example, "My goal is to incorporate more student-centered activities into my lectures." Then the teacher plans the lesson with the coach, who uses praise, generalization/labels, and clarifying, eliciting, and leading questions as the need arises.

Debriefing sessions begin with the coach sharing the skill application form with the teacher. Some coaching teams like to do this prior to the actual debriefing so the teacher can examine and interpret the data independently before meeting with the coach. The coach encourages the teacher to interpret the data, using praise, generalization/labels, and clarifying, eliciting, and leading questions as required.

Some coaching projects have found it helpful for both the teacher and coach to complete a PQP (Praise, Question, Polish) sheet after each lesson execution. Below is a sample of a coach's completed PQP sheet.

PQP SHEET (Coach's form)
Target Skill: Inductive Approach
Date: March 8, 1987

Praise: specific reference to aspects of the lesson that went well, possibly with generalizations/labels:

1. *The filmstrip and brief reading provided the students sufficient details about the Japanese government. They then had the specifics they needed to complete the chart.*
2. *The students gave quality reponses for the "American Government" side of the chart — more specifics. They obviously had the background necessary for this.*

Question: clarifying and eliciting questions:

1. *Why did you change your key reading question?*
2. *How else might you have developed the specifics of this lesson?*

Polish: suggestions for improvement in the form of leading questions:

1. *Do you think more students would have been able to make the generalizations if they had first examined the charts and discussed the key differences in small groups?*

The teacher also can complete a PQP sheet after teaching the lesson. It would include:

Praise: what I think went well today and why
Question: questions I have for the coach about my lesson
Polish: what I would do differently if I were to reteach this lesson or will do differently in future lessons

PQP sheets help the coach to carry out the two basic coaching functions: feedback on instructional methodology and personal facilitation. For the teacher they provide a means for maintaining an equal partnership with the coach in the analysis of the lesson.

Scheduling Coaching Sessions

For coaching to be effective, there must be designated time during the school day to meet for planning and debriefing. And if the coaching pair are colleagues in the same school, they need matched schedules in order to carry out observations in the classroom. This lack of designated coaching time is a major frustration to a coaching pair, as is evident in the following excerpt from a teacher's coaching journal:

> Unfortunately, Bob and I didn't coach formally as often as we would have liked. Certainly, we shared lessons during planning, and PQP'd them; but observation and debriefing became difficult because we share only one planning period during the week, so it was hard to work in observation time. We tried to adapt by describing how lessons had gone, the high and low points, but that's just not the same as direct observation. You can't really see how the lesson unfolds. When Bob was able to observe in my classroom, the feedback was so much more substantial. For example, one time when he was observing, the first part of my lesson worked fine. The students could identify groups around the school and give specific characteristics of these groups. The problem came when they had to make the transition from these stereotypic descriptions about student groups and become specific about their own lives and lifestyles. They didn't want to talk about themselves in teacher-selected small groups. Coaching to the rescue! Bob suggested a chart on which the students could list the stereotypic descriptors and then apply those stereotypes to themselves, but then add other specific items to describe themselves more thoroughly. I tried it – right then and there – and it worked!

Some coaching pairs report that once the coaching process takes hold, it permeates their professional encounters. Extemporaneous planning and debriefing sessions occur during lunch, walking to the parking lot after school, or while on hall-duty between classes. Successes and failures often need to be shared immediately, and these encounters provide a vehicle for the sharing. Such casual meetings, however, should not be a substitute for designated coaching time during which teachers and their coaches can concentrate exclusively on the target skills.

Implementing a Coaching Program

Principals, supervisors, department chairs, college methods course instructors, and supervisors of student teachers all can play a vital role in implementing coaching at both the preservice and inservice levels. Following are suggestions for initiating and implementing coaching at both levels.

Coaching for Inservice Teachers

1. Examine the topics and format of inservice programs the school system currently offers. Which programs are designed to help teachers to develop skills that are relatively complex and not normally used in the instructional repertoire of the teacher population? Do the current inservice programs include the elements of theory, modeling, protected practice, and coaching? If these four components of the coaching process are not present, how can the inservice programs be adapted to include them?

2. Share the coaching model concept with colleagues at staff meetings at both the system and building levels. Encourage educators to brainstorm how various coaching models might be used to improve teacher effectiveness. Stress the value of coaching and being coached to various populations. For example, serving as a coach could bring a new sense of professionalism to an outstanding veteran teacher or administrator. Coaching could be a part of the induction process for

first-year teachers. Coaching might be used to spark a burned-out teacher or to rescue an unsatisfactory teacher.

3. Create a supportive environment for coaching within a school by:

- encouraging pairs or teams of teachers to use coaching to refine existing or dormant skills;
- arranging appropriate inservice programs in which teachers can identify a skill they do not have sufficient background to begin using on their own, but which they want to work on;
- providing training in the coaching process for participants;
- providing released time in schedules so coaching pairs have time during the school day to plan, observe, and debrief;
- giving verbal support to coaching participants' efforts at faculty meetings and through memos;
- making oneself available to serve as a team-teaching coach.

Coaching for Preservice Teachers

Coaching can be implemented as well at the preservice level. The elements of the coaching process already are present in most preservice programs. They only have to be put into action. In fact, a good case can be made for introducing the coaching concept at this level because it prepares teacher education students to use it after they start teaching.

Preservice students become aware of various teaching strategies in their methods course through assigned reading, lectures, and in-class discussions. They learn to identify and analyze specific methodologies by observing demonstrations by their methods course instructor or by viewing videotapes of a master teacher in an actual school setting. Additionally, during field experiences related to their methods courses, preservice students can be assigned to keep a log in which they identify and analyze specific teaching methods they observe. Directions for a typical log might read:

During your visits to your assigned school, observe how your supervising teacher uses small-group activities with students. Describe the lesson during which the small group activity is used. What criteria were used in assigning students to a group? How many students were in each group? Why do you think the teacher used this number? What directions did the teacher give to each group to achieve the instructional goal? What roles were assigned to each group member? What was the teacher's role during the group work?

A modified coaching experience can be carried out in the protected environment of the methods course classroom. First the preservice student prepares a lesson plan focusing on a specific skill, which will be taught to a small group of the student's peers. The peer group gives feedback on the lesson plan in the form of a PQP sheet, which they have learned to use in their methods course. After the planning conference with peers, the lesson is revised, if necessary, and then taught to the peer group. After teaching the lesson, the student has a debriefing session with peers and the methods course instructor.

Note the parallels in this preservice coaching process to the coaching process described earlier for inservice teachers. Both focus on a particular skill; both involve peers for feedback; both have a planning, execution, and debriefing session; and both react by means of a PQP. This introduction to the coaching process while still on campus gives preservice students an experience in collegial communication in the formative stages of their professional development.

Preservice students who have experienced this introduction to coaching testify to its value in the following typical excerpt from a student's journal.

> I went into my planning session totally convinced that my lesson wasn't what it should be, but I didn't know why. What I learned from my group was that the second half of my lesson was right on target. That restored my faith! It was my introduction that wasn't working. I was assuming too much. As soon as Jane asked me if the students had already learned the concept of longitude and latitude, I realized

I didn't know if they had, but I was assuming they had the necessary background.

Through peer praise and questioning, this preservice teacher education student salvaged his self-esteem and his lesson.

As the teacher education student concludes preservice preparation with student teaching, the coaching process can come into full operation. The model is that of a more knowledgeable, in-school colleague working in a team-teaching coaching situation. The supervising teacher and the student teacher cooperatively plan, execute, and then debrief the lessons. After satisfactory competence is demonstrated by the student teachers, the coaching model can shift to the more traditional student teaching model, with the supervising teachers becoming the observer-coach and the student teacher assuming sole responsibility for lesson execution. The continued use of PQP by both the supervising teacher and student teacher assists the student teacher in developing skills, self-confidence, and lesson ownership.

Conclusion

Coaching has been shown to be a highly effective form of staff development. When properly used, coaching enables teachers to master skills and to add them to their instructional repertoire. One can only wonder why coaching is not more widely used to improve teaching practices. Would coaching have made such heralded approaches as inductive teaching and individualized instruction routine in all classrooms? And what promise is there for such current movements as writing across the curriculum and teaching thinking skills without coaching as a vital part of the professional development at both the preservice and inservice levels? Coaching could be the missing link needed for truly improving instruction in the schools of this nation.

Coaching has the potential for cultivating a new sense of professionalism in the teaching profession. At the heart of coaching is the recognition that teachers are central to the improvement of education; in the final analysis, it is teachers who determine whether or not learning is taking place in the classroom. When teachers realize that they can make a contribution to the professional growth of another teacher, they know they are professionals.

Coaching develops a spirit of collegiality. Teaching is typically a solitary activity. It is not common for teachers to meet and analyze their teaching styles; it is even rarer for teachers to observe each other. Coaching, with its collegial requirements, can help eliminate the isolation of teaching. Through the coaching process, teachers feel they

are able to take risks, to try out new skills, because a colleague is there to support them.

Twenty years ago, as a first-year teacher getting ready for my first evaluation by my principal and system supervisor, I was very nervous. I remember walking into the classroom of a veteran teacher after school about a week before my evaluation and asking her if she would listen to me explain the lesson plan I had been working on. Sally and I must have talked for at least an hour. She didn't seem to mind helping, and I certainly was grateful for her advice. She even peeked in as I tried it out on my first-period class the day of the evaluation. And between classes, together we made some last minute changes.

I tell this story because I think many readers can relate to it. Many of us, as beginners, sought out more experienced colleagues to help us improve our teaching. Many of us have coached and have been coached informally for years. I think coaching comes naturally to us. But only now are we learning how to use the full potential of the coaching process. We have yet to discover all the models, benefits, and constraints of coaching; but there certainly is sufficient evidence to warrant our pursuit of them.

By the way, my lesson was rated "Outstanding." Thanks, Coach!

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